

# Wild-Gathered

Seattle florist teaches workshop students the fine art of foraging for their design work.

BY DEBRA PRINZING  
PHOTOS BY ANNA PETERS

Based in Seattle, **Botanique** is housed in a freestanding studio located just steps beyond **Kelly Sullivan**'s family home, surrounded by a vibrant cutting garden that serves as muse.

Like many floral designers, Kelly has responded to teaching requests in the past – from CSA customers eager to learn a few skills to aspiring florists requesting one-on-one instruction. At the same time – at least in Seattle – the market has become flooded with competition for floral design education.

In response, Kelly has fine-tuned the themes of her workshops and also the way she teaches. Teaching underscores what is uniquely her brand and personal floral design aesthetic. She shares essential design mechanics with her students but also offers content they aren't able to find from other workshops.

Two recent courses illustrate the direction she's taking. Last fall, Kelly taught "Grow, Harvest, Design," an on-site workshop at her cutting garden and studio. "This appealed to people who wanted to learn how to grow flowers and design with what they grow and harvest," she explains. "Students cut whatever they wanted from my garden and then learned how to design a compote arrangement."

In May, Kelly's "Forage and Create" workshop moved from Botanique's cutting garden in the city to a more spacious setting at **Wildshoot Forest & Farm**, a boutique wedding venue in Granite Falls, Wash., about 35 miles north of Seattle.

She partnered with Wildshoot's owner **Celia Eizik** and Seattle area film photographer **Anna Peters** to design an immersive experience true to season and location.

The course description promised an alluring experience: "*Armed with clippers and a foraging tote, you will be invited to harvest woodland treasures, blooming branches, gorgeous foliage, spring wildflowers and any other natural elements that inspire. We will combine these found and gathered pieces with beautiful, seasonal blooms and textures to create lush, magical bridal bouquets.*"

Kelly began with an overview of the seasonal flowers and foliages she sourced from local growers. "I wanted people to see those blooms first so they would have an idea of the colors, shapes and textures while foraging, especially if they were inspired by a specific flower," she explains.



Kelly Sullivan of Botanique considers foraging an essential facet of her design business. Here, one of her workshop students is encouraged to blend cutting garden flowers with foraged greenery.



The Forage & Create Workshop took place at Wildshoot Forest & Farm, an event venue in Granite Falls, Wash. Kelly Sullivan's design students foraged ingredients from the woods and meadows and did design work at a table inside the barn. Overhead, a chandelier of foraged maple, aspen and sweet rocket; beyond, views of nature as their inspiration.



Workshop participant Carey Wendel of Bleedfoot Florals



Floral artist Kelly Sullivan demonstrates how to select and properly harvest and forage botanical design elements.

The group then set out for Wildshoot’s woodlands and meadows as Kelly demonstrated hands-on tips for proper cutting and clipping. “It was late May, so we had access to Celia’s garden, which was filled with wildflowers, foliage and other cool weedy items. The woods offered maple and aspen; tree branches, deciduous huckleberry, tons of ferns, and a plethora of other interesting textures,” Kelly says. “Celia invited everyone to forage anything they wanted from her property. Her generosity made the day really special.”

Participants returned with their wild-gathered treasures to Wildshoot’s barn, a spacious venue with plenty of design space. Kelly showed how to process foraged stems and branches to extend their lives in a bouquet or centerpiece. While demonstrating her design approach that combines commercially grown flowers with foraged elements, questions from the group of six students guided Kelly’s instruction.

“We talked a lot about color and mechanics for creating a bouquet that has dynamic movement but is also a sturdy piece that isn’t going to fall apart,” she says. “I find that’s one thing people struggle with when designing in this style. The bouquet needs to be mechanically tidy while looking loose and natural.”

Kelly also led a discussion on accurately calculating the “value of foraging,” especially when pricing for wedding and event pieces. “I tried to give students the experience of what I do, which is purchase a lot of flowers and then also find these really cool, unique, foraged and grown pieces to add,” she explains.

After a day of foraging and designing, Anna Peters worked with a model to capture images of each student’s bouquet for portfolio use. “We make sure everyone gets a really good portfolio piece in addition to action shots of them working with flowers or even foraging,” Kelly says.

Teaching offers wedding and event designers a way to diversify and add a new revenue stream, Kelly acknowledges. But her advice is to develop a curriculum unique to one’s brand – otherwise, the return isn’t always financially rewarding.

“The truth is, there are a lot of workshops out there right now – it’s a saturated market. I’m trying to get really clear on what I have to offer that is unique and not generic in any way. My workshops always include some sort of foraging or harvesting component, which very much lines up with how I design,” Kelly explains. “I really believe in making works that are specific to a time and place; what’s happening here, right now. That feels authentic and true for me.”

#### DETAILS

Botanique, [botaniqueflowers.com](http://botaniqueflowers.com), [@botanique\\_flowers\\_seattle](https://www.instagram.com/botanique_flowers_seattle)

Wildshoot Forest & Farm, [wildshootforestfarm.com](http://wildshootforestfarm.com)

Anna Peters Photography, [annapetersphoto.com](http://annapetersphoto.com), [@annapeter\\_s](https://www.instagram.com/annapeter_s)